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EARLY MEDIAEVAL ANATOMY¹

The object of Corner's book is to trace the accessible threads of continuity in the development of didactic anatomy at the School of Salerno and elsewhere during the 11th–13th centuries. It was prepared by Professor Corner (University of Rochester) during a sabbatical period abroad and largely reflects the views of Singer. The main story is simple. During the long, sterile period following the Dark Ages, there was no anatomy to speak of until the advent of Constantine of Africa, who, about 1080, translated the *Almaleki* or Royal Book (*Pantegni*) of Haly Abbas. Two books on anatomy (II, 2, 3) in this encyclopædia constituted almost the sole source of knowledge at Salerno for a century (1080–1180). Early in the 12th century there appeared three tracts on the dissection of the pig, viz., a "first Salernitan demonstration," variously attributed to Copho (*anatomia Cophonis*) and to Galen (*anatomia parva*); an anonymous "second demonstration," discovered by Henschel in the Breslau Codex (1846) and re-edited by Benedict (1920); and a third discussion of porcine anatomy, known as the *anatomia Mauri*, discovered by Sudhoff in a Vatican MS. and edited by Ploss (1921). These slight performances are apparently the only existing remains of the period 1100–1150. There followed three tracts on human anatomy, known as the *anatomia Ricardi*, the *anatomia Nicolai* and the *anatomia vivorum*, which were not Salernitan but of English and French provenance. Following a clear and informing historical exposition, Corner prints a carefully-collated Latin text of the tract attributed to Copho, with translation, also

¹ Anatomical Tests of the Earlier Middle Ages. A Study in the Transmission of Culture. By George W. Corner. 112 pp. 8°. Washington, Carnegie Inst., 1927.

English versions of the "second Salernitan demonstration," the anatomy of Master Nicholas and the *anatomia vivorum*, which Töply wrongly attributed to Richard the Englishman (1922). The translations are well executed and readable. The two Salernitan demonstrations afford, as Corner says, a lively picture of dissection at the famous school and its prosectors, eager, vivacious, dogmatic, painstaking, puzzled, captious, disputatious, yet self-reliant, as "teaching from the specimen and not from books alone—an unexpected thing in mediæval anatomy, not to be seen again until the days of Mundinus." Our author demands of those who write on 12th and 13th century medicine that "by toiling over the original sources and by familiarity with the manuscripts, they learn the difficulties and the pitfalls of their subject." Some of these pitfalls have been elucidated latterly by Sudhoff, who opens fire on the mooted points in a review and three separate articles. The Copho text was originally printed in the second Latin translation of Galen (Venice, 1502), a rare book, of *presqu' un incunable* type, which was not accessible to Corner, nor even to Choulant. Of this, Sudhoff publishes a confirmatory title page, with table of contents.² The more reliable 12th century Latin MS. of this text, in the Vatican Library, also escaped Corner's notice, and has now been reprinted by Sudhoff.³ The MS. (No. 284) of the *anatomia vivorum*, which Corner unearthed at Chartres, was duly listed by Pansier in his catalogue of 1909.⁴ As to the status of Ricardus Anglicus and his probable identity with Richard of Salerno, Richard of Paris and perhaps even Master Nicholas, Corner is apparently unfamiliar with the close exegesis of the English antiquarian, C. L. Kingsford (1896),⁵ aside from those of Beusing (1922)⁶ and of Sudhoff (1924),⁷ who now prints the authentic *anatomia Ricardi* (from his *Micrologus*) for the first time.⁸ These details would seem mere pedantries but for the changes of viewpoint necessitated by

² Sudhoff: Janus, Leyden, 1927, XXXI, 294-303, pl. III.

³ Sudhoff: Arch. f. Gesch. d. Wissensch., Leipz., 1927, 1-18.

⁴ Pansier: Arch. f. Gesch. d. Med., Leipz., 1908-9, II, 16, item 5.

⁵ Kingsford: Diet. Nat. Biog., Lond., 1896, XLVIII, 201.

⁶ H. H. Beusing: Leben und Werke des Richardus Anglicus. Leipzig diss., 1922.

⁷ Sudhoff: Janus, Leyden, 1924, XXVIII, 397-403.

⁸ Sudhoff: Arch. f. Gesch. d. Med., Leipz., 1926-7, XIX, 209-239.

Sudhoff's superior control of archival material. Those who have no access to the original MSS. must necessarily accept the information vouchsafed by actual explorers until new findings give another turn to the deceptive mediæval kaleidoscope. Even Sudhoff has altered his viewpoint frequently, as new MSS. turned up. Thus, when Töply attributed the *anatomia vivorum* to Richard of Wendover, a very real clerical physician (canon of St. Paul's) who died in 1252, his statement was honestly taken on trust until exploded. It was this anonymous tract, as Sudhoff shows, and not the real *anatomia Ricardi* of the Ashmole, Basel, Munich and Vatican codices, which had been included in the works of Galen, from the Cinquecento MSS. and the 1502 printed edition onward.⁹ The only genuine anatomical treatise of consequence in the Galenic Corpus is the *Encheiresis*, which was not known in print until the Aldine of 1525.

The real status of mediæval anatomy is this: up to the time of Leonardo's wonderful drawings, it was mainly porcine, simian, bovine, pseudo-Galenic, and, as far as the dry texts are concerned, more a contribution to general morphology than to actual human anatomy. But from the prehistoric (Aurignacian) period, through Greek sculpture, the Florentine paintings and Charcot's *Iconographie*, constitutional (external human) anatomy remained fresh and vital, a going concern, and even in recent primitive plastic imagery, it sometimes portrays endocrine disorders and pathological deformations. Thus, the mediæval surgeons did very well with operations on the external parts. When they opened the abdomen, they were really fishing in the dark, performing "autopsies *in vivo*" (cf. Leonardo's *situs viscerum*). Apart from the general European trend toward authorized human dissection *viâ* the judicial post-mortem, Corner's translations afford a perspective of the mediæval beginnings in comparative anatomy, which is highly creditable to American scholarship.

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⁹ Sudhoff: Janus, Leyden, 1927, XXXI, 298-303.